

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 05377 022310Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8648

CONFIDENTIAL PANAMA 5377

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REFS: (A) STATE 190452 (B) PANAMA 5375

1. AFTER DELIVERING SECRETARY'S MESSAGE (REF A), I HAD LONG DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOYD REGARDING THE NON-ALIGNED MEETING IN SRI LANKA (REPORTED REF. B). IN THE COURSE OF OUR TALK, I MENTIONED THE PUERTO RICO ISSUE AS ONE THAT WAS OF DEEP INTEREST FOR US. I TOLD THE MINISTER IT WAS CERTAIN THAT SOME OF THOSE ATTENDING THE SRI LANKA SESSIONS WOULD TRY, AS THEY HAVE BEFORE, TO MAKE THE FUTURE OF PUERTO RICO A TARGET FOR ATTACKS ON THE U.S. I NOTED THAT THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED THEIR VIEWS ON THEIR FUTURE IN FREE ELECTIONS AND THAT THEY WERE SCHEDULED TO DO SO ONCE AGAIN THIS NOVEMBER. IN THE PAST WELL OVER NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF PUERTO RICANS HAD EXPRESSED A CLEAR PREFERENCE EITHER FOR DIRECT STATEHOOD OR FOR SOME FORM OF A COMMONWEALTH STATUS WITH CONTINUED CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. I ALSO REMINDED THE MINISTER THAT THOSE WHO WERE PUSHING THIS ISSUE HARDEST IN INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS WERE PEOPLE WHO DID NOT KNOW WHAT FREE ELECTIONS WERE AND DID NOT TRUST THEIR OWN PEOPLE TO USE THEM.

2. THE MINISTER SAID HE WAS TOTALLY OPPOSED TO THE CUBAN

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POSITION ON PUERTO RICO. HE HOPED THAT PANAMA COULD

AVOID ANY INVOLVEMENT IN DEBATE OF THIS ISSUE. HE SHOWED ME A PARAGRAPH FROM A SPEECH HE IS WORKING ON FOR THE SRI LANKA SESSION. ON PUERTO RICO, IT SAYS THAT THE QUESTION OF INDEPENDENCE IS ONE FOR THE PUERTO RICANS TO DECIDE. THE PATH TO INDEPENDENCE SHOULD REMAIN OPEN IF THEY EVER FREELY CHOOSE TO USE IT. THAT, HE SAID, IS ALL HE INTENDS TO SAY. HE THEN COMMENTED WRYLY THAT HIS CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT MIGHT NOT EVEN WANT HIM TO SAY THAT MUCH--SINCE IT MIGHT NOT BE TOO WELL RECEIVED BY OTHER DELEGATIONS.

JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, LOCAL ELECTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, NONALIGNED NATIONS MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: blochd0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PANAMA05377
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760297-1094
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760896/aaaadgjc.tel
Line Count: 72
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 190452, 76 PANAMA 5375
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: blochd0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <28 OCT 2004 by blochd0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
TAGS: PFOR, PN, US, RQ, CU, (BOYD GUARDIA, AQUILINO EDGARDO), (JORDEN, WILLIAM J)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006